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MARTIN WAGNER'S

# Hepcats

NUMBER 5 APRIL 1997



*MW*  
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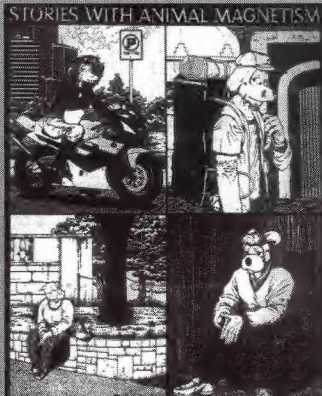
Be honest with yourself. You know your life is a meaningless lie until you muster the fortitude to grab that checkbook and get your hands on some of this magnificent Hepmerchandise we have to offer you here! Let the feeding frenzy begin!



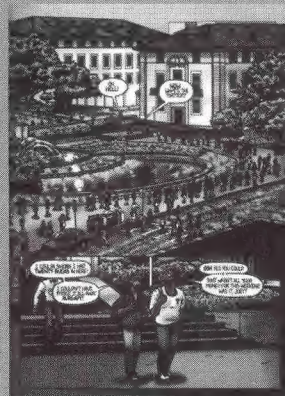
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Throw those old Bee Gees 8-tracks away! These are the songs all the heppiest people are getting into and off to. 63 minutes of aural bliss from 9 artists. Comes packaged with the limited edition of #0. **\$13.00 US/\$16.50 Can./Foreign**



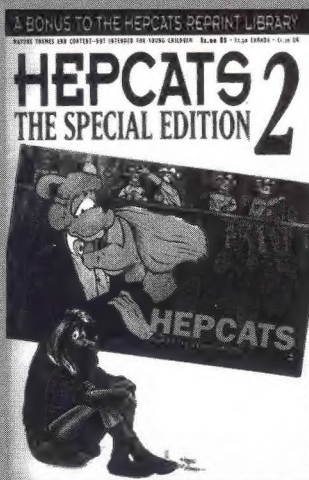
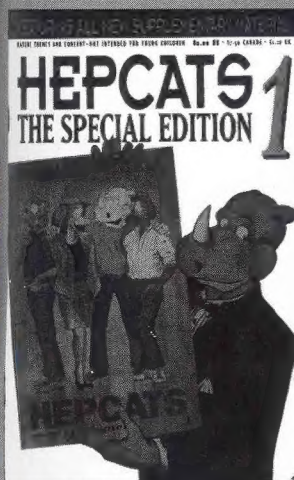
**SNOWBLIND, PART ONE PAPERBACK GRAPHIC NOVEL.** This stunningly assembled collection includes issues #3-#10, the first half of Martin's wildly acclaimed story of Erica. First printing still in stock. **\$18.95 US/\$23.95 Can./Foreign**



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**PORTFOLIO PRINT SERIES.** Previously available only on the Hepcats web page, this is a set of five full-size, 11"x14" B&W (not color) reproductions of art from Hepcats #0. Autographed and numbered by Martin! Only 200 sets available, so act fast! **\$12 US/\$15 Can./\$20 Foreign**



**ORIGINAL DOUBLE DIAMOND PRESS EDITIONS**  
Martin self-published a dozen issues before coming aboard at AP, and you collectors and curiosity seekers can still get some. These all feature art, covers, letters, and miscellaneous stuff that won't be in the AP versions, and quantities (especially of #11 and #12) are limited.  
**HEPCATS 1 SPECIAL EDITION**  
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CANADIAN ORDERS MUST BE POSTAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY (sorry).  
FOREIGN ORDERS PLEASE SEND U.S. FUNDS HOWEVER POSSIBLE.

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**MARTIN WAGNER, PO BOX 27157, AUSTIN, TX 78755-2157**

<http://www.mcs.net/~dvoskuil/hepcats>



# Antarctic Blast

APRIL 1997

Write to us at: Antarctic Press/7272 Wurzbach, #204/San Antonio, TX 78240  
Visit our web site at <http://www.antarctic-press.com/>

**ANTARCTIC  
PRESS  
ATTRACTIONS**  
(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

## Taxing Situation

BY JOE DUNN

**APRIL 1997 ATTRACTIONS**  
**Addam Omega #2**  
**Code Name Scorpio #2**  
**Judgment Pawns #2**  
**Diesel #1**  
**Shotgun Mary:**  
**Blood Lore #2**  
**Hepcats #5**  
**Warrior Nun:**  
**Black & White #2**  
**Gold Digger #35**  
**Luftwaffe: 1946 #2**

First a special thanks for all the guests, attendees, retailers, volunteers and staff who attended Antarcticon 1997. It was a big success with over 700 participants. It seemed that everybody had a good time and we did get local news coverage. We are already planning next year's convention, and we expect bigger and better things. Some new additions to the convention include a gaming room, an additional video room, and a convention dance. It should be a lot of fun.

Well here we are...another tax time. I wonder why the government decided on April 15th as tax day. Is it because you have to work until April 15th to meet your obligation to the government? Or did somebody decide that it would be funny to have the deadline the same month as April Fool's Day? Or maybe April has no other redeeming value like a holiday or break, so they decided, hey, since we're screwed anyway during this month, why not make people work on their taxes? Like most Americans, I really do not mind paying taxes but it just seems that we're throwing the money down a pit and not getting anything out of the taxes we pay. I mean, it's cool that I see an F-15 fly over every once in a while and see a cop nab a speeder, but when I sit in traffic during rush hour I sometimes think how all the people around me and throughout the U.S. are paying taxes. Even when I'm sleeping Hawaii is paying taxes. It seems that we pay enough to make government work properly. The one problem I see is accountability. There is this big bank that the government withdraws from that will never have a bounced check because nobody is accountable. Do you see why our debt is in the trillions?

The comic industry has some of the same problems. Granted not the monetary excess, but the accountability problem. Everybody is in a catch 22 situation so it's easy to blame someone else for the problems of the industry. Does everybody blame Marvel for the collapse of the industry? Some people are quick to blame their decision as the catalyst for the current market downturn. At least they were trying to do something and making themselves accountable. They were saying "our product should sell better so we will take the responsibility to market and distribute our product." It was not a bad idea just poorly executed...it was bad management. Just think if they took that extra 10-15% they earned from self-distribution and made a cool X-Men movie. That would have helped their cause. Everybody should be brave enough to be accountable. Don't think that if you're a publisher, creator, distributor or fan that you are not somewhat to blame. We all did something to create the current market situation. How many times did a publisher or creator not come out on time? How many times did a retailer say a book was not available or not reorder a title because it was not worth his time? How many times did a fan not pick up that subscription? Take the blame and try to fix it. There isn't room for excuses any more.

Speaking of jobs and the IRS...AP is looking for artists, writers, inkers, and colorists. If you want to try, send us a submission. And even if we don't use your work from the beginning, don't give up. Ask Fred Perry about the first work he sent us. Well I gotta go...have to do my taxes.

Joeming W. Dunn, MD

**Hepcats website: <http://www.mcs.net/~dvoskuil/hepcats/>**

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Hepcats, no. 5, April 1997, is published by the Antarctic Press, 7272 Wurzbach, Suite #204, San Antonio, TX 78240. FAX#:(210) 614-5029. Hepcats © and ™ 1997 Martin Wagner. Story and art © 1997 Martin Wagner. All other material is ™ and © 1997 Antarctic Press. No similarity to any character(s) and/or place(s) is intended, and any similarity is purely coincidental. Nothing from this book may be reproduced without the express written consent of the authors, except for purposes of review or promotion. "And I run through a crack in the past like a dead man walking." —David Bowie. Print run: 7000. Printed by Brenner Printing, San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A.



# Hepcats Snowblind

CREATED, WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY  
**MARTIN WAGNER**

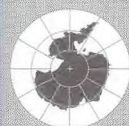
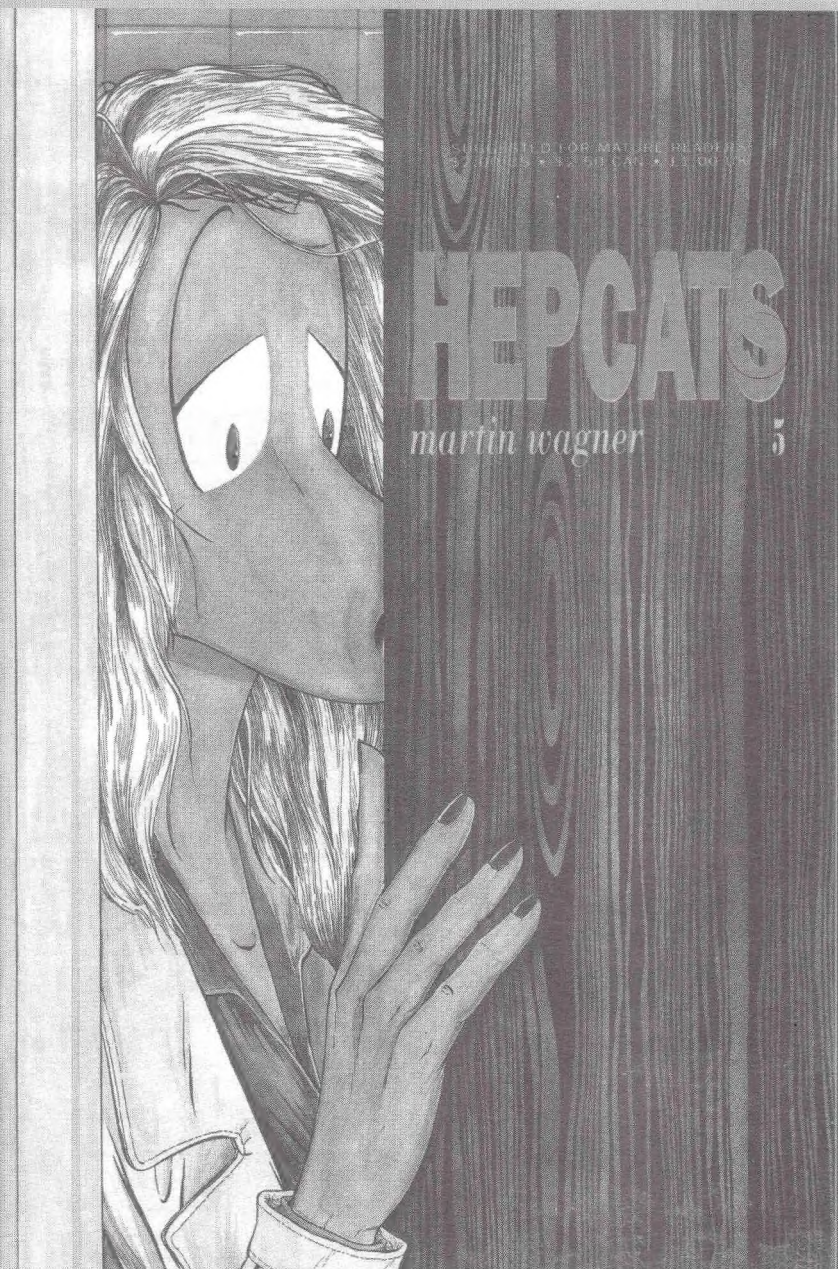
Chapter 3

## Faces and Traces

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY  
DOUBLE DIAMOND PRESS, MAY 1990

WAY OF THE WORLD PROLOGUE  
DRAWN AT RHINOCEROS STUDIOS,  
AUSTIN, TEXAS, FEBRUARY 1997

ISSUE NUMBER 5  
APRIL 1997



ANTARCTIC PRESS  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



# HEPCATS 5

## CREATOR'S COMMENTARY TO 1997 EDITION

(These introductions are provided by Martin Wagner as exclusives to the Antarctic Press reprints of *Hepcats*' first 12 issues. We recommend you read them after reading the story, so as to avoid spoilers.)

This issue was produced at point in the original self-published series' history when the first true problems began creeping in, both personal and professional. This issue was the last one to appear in the first year of the series' run; most latter-day readers who attacked me for not shipping issues regularly are entirely ignorant of the fact that the first five issues of *Hepcats* did in fact ship in the first year (1989-90). However, at this stage, the real personal and financial crises began cropping up.

*Hepcats* had been publishing at a dead loss the entire time, except for issue one, and mail order was more or less sustaining me and my wife (her dancing was in fact way more lucrative, but erratic as well). Remember, this was still at a time when black-and-white books were the scum of the industry, back before *Bone* and *Strangers in Paradise* and other books that suddenly made black-and-whites cool again, and retailers weren't the least bit bashful about letting black-and-white cartoonists know they were to blame for everything that was wrong in their lives. (I remember one store owner telling me, "Nope, I ain't never heard of *Hepcats*, and I wouldn't order it even if I had.") With #5, I finally hit the brick wall I had been dreading: no money to publish the issue. I finally managed to scrape together enough to give Port Publications a down payment, and they did the book for me, and in the editorial section I ran a fund-raiser plea that, by the grace of the god of comics fandom, fell upon receptive ears. Many fans mail-ordered various and sundry items and the windfall from this little love-happening helped myself and *Hepcats* through that long, hot summer. But it was a near thing.

On a personal level, though, this was the point in my marriage when my wife began pulling the first of the many crazinesses (nothing to do with the comic; she had a whole reality of her own) that would break us up the following year. So I had that stress to deal with. Joy joy.

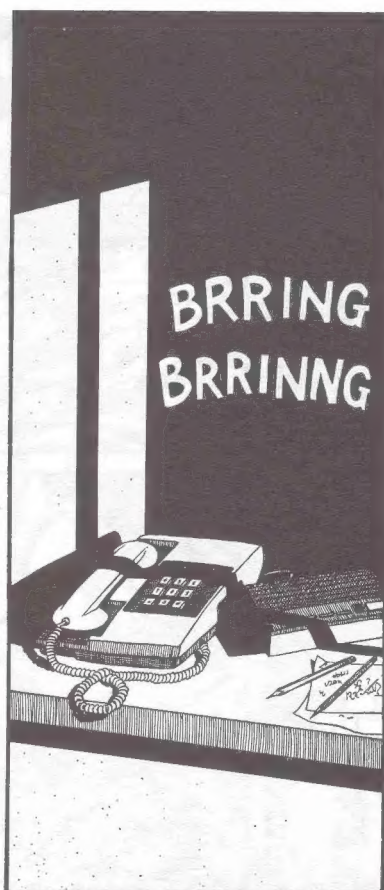
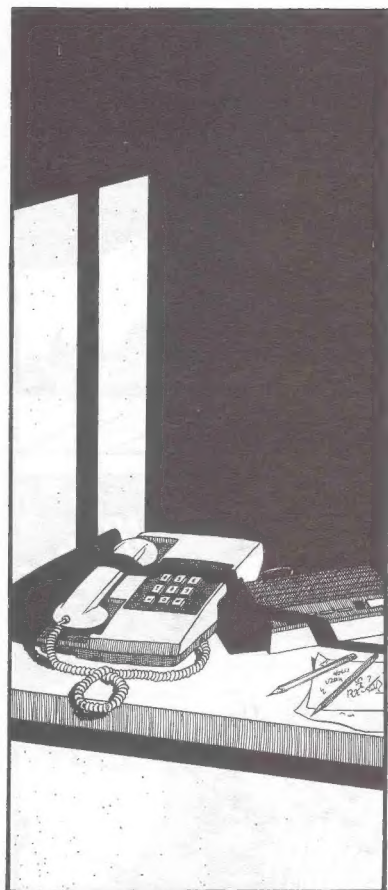
Therefore, it is as a direct result of all of the mental pressure I was under at this time, that *Hepcats* #5 is perhaps (at least, in my own opinion) the artistically weakest of the early issues. Though there are strong drawings herein, such as the Austin skyline that forms the double-page spread, there are also some wretched flubs, like the unbearably stiff drawings of Arnie walking determinedly down the mall corridor in search of the inexplicably missing Erica. There was also one ghastly perspective mistake that I later corrected for the *Snowblind Part One* collection (and this reprint). Basically, my mind was in six or seven places at once, and it was only by the greatest good fortune, and the charity of those who loved of the book, that it came together at all.

The personal stresses of this period would continue for another year, though, fortunately, I was able to pull myself together as a creator better after this slump, so that issues #6 and #7 would be stronger as issues. But plain figures tell the tale: in its first year, *Hepcats* #1-#5 were released; in its second, only #6-#7. And things would get worse before they got better.



Embarrassing Photos from My Youth  
Dept.: Cancun, 1984, years before the  
trivials of being a self-publisher hit  
home. Still, I am every bit as wasted  
as I look.





BRRING  
BRRING



KICK

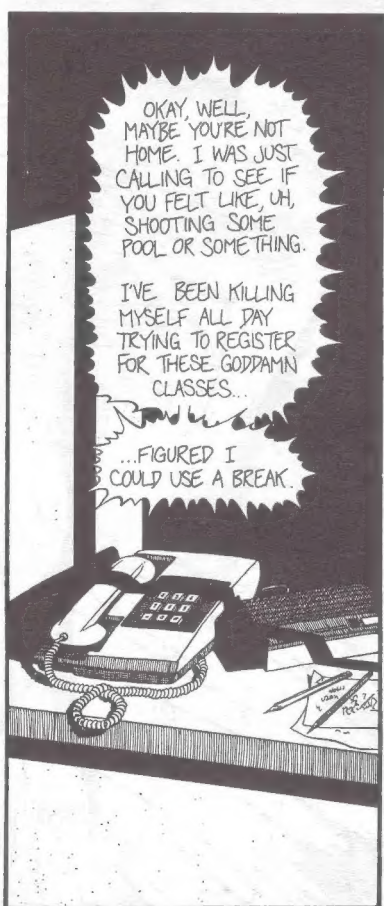
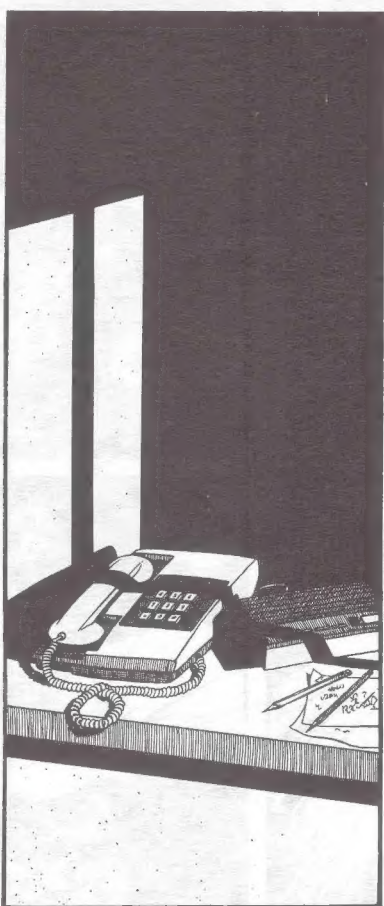
HEY, THIS  
IS ARNIE! DON'T  
YOU JUST HATE  
THESE MACHINES?  
WELL, LEAVE ME  
A MESSAGE  
ANYWAY AND I'LL  
GET BACK TO  
YOU.



BEEBEEP

HEY, ARN!  
IT'S GUNTHER!  
YOU HOME?

WAKE UP,  
LAZY-ASS!



OKAY, WELL,  
MAYBE YOU'RE NOT  
HOME. I WAS JUST  
CALLING TO SEE IF  
YOU FELT LIKE, OH,  
SHOOTING SOME  
POOL OR SOMETHING.

I'VE BEEN KILLING  
MYSELF ALL DAY  
TRYING TO REGISTER  
FOR THESE GODDAMN  
CLASSES...

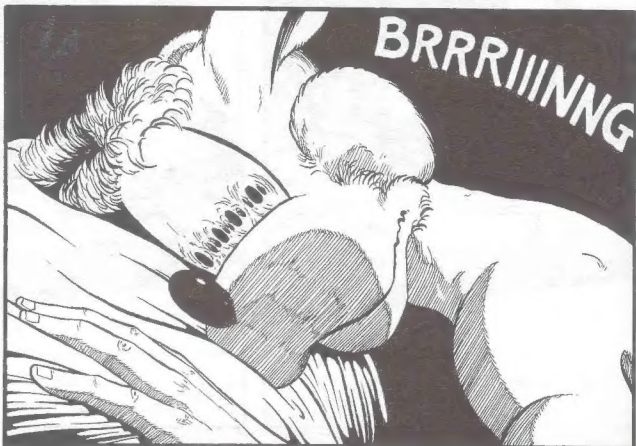
...FIGURED I  
COULD USE A BREAK.



SO, UH, CALL  
BACK IF YOU GET A  
CHANCE....

AND, OF  
COURSE, LET ME AND  
JOEY KNOW HOW ERICA'S  
DOING.... SEE YOU, BUD.

KLA-KLIK



BRRRIIING



KLIK

HEY, THIS  
IS ARNIE! DON'T  
YOU JUST HATE  
THESE MACHINES?  
WELL, LEAVE ME  
A MESSAGE ANY-  
WAY AND I'LL GET  
BACK TO YOU.

BE-  
BEEP

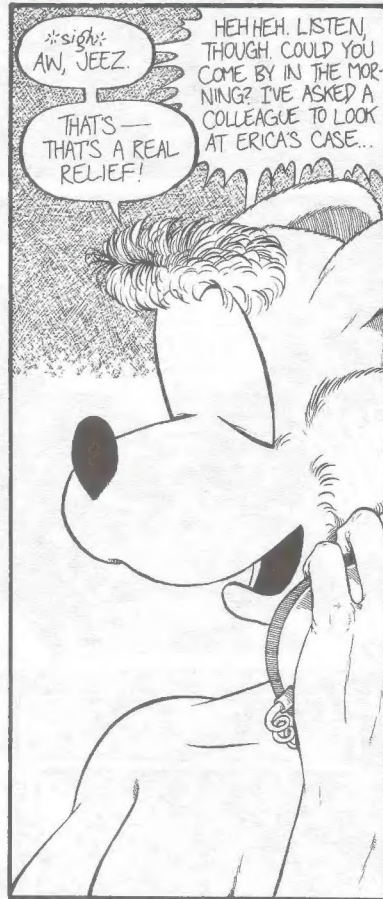
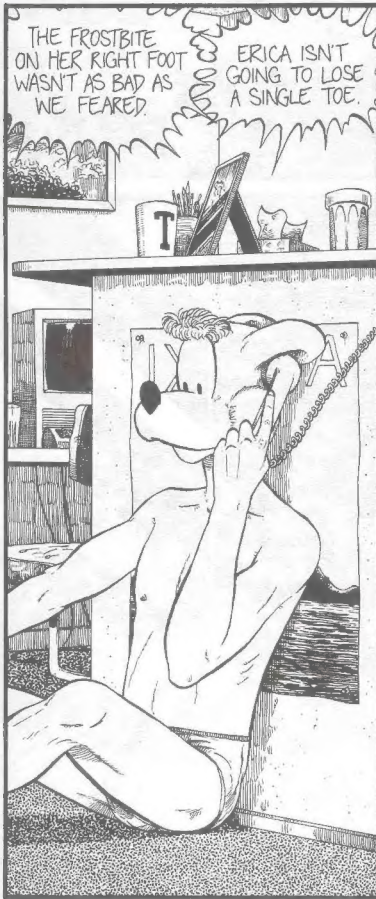
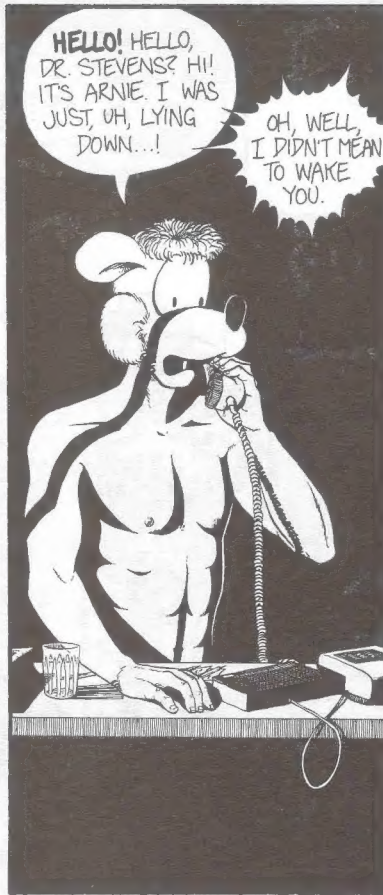
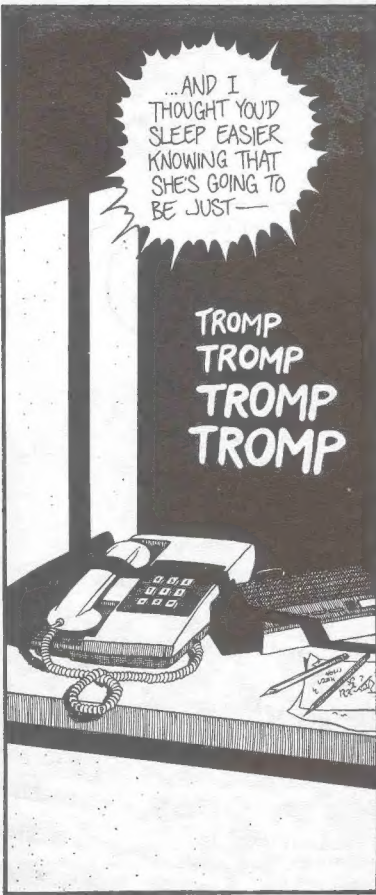
ARNIE, THIS  
IS DR. STEVENS.



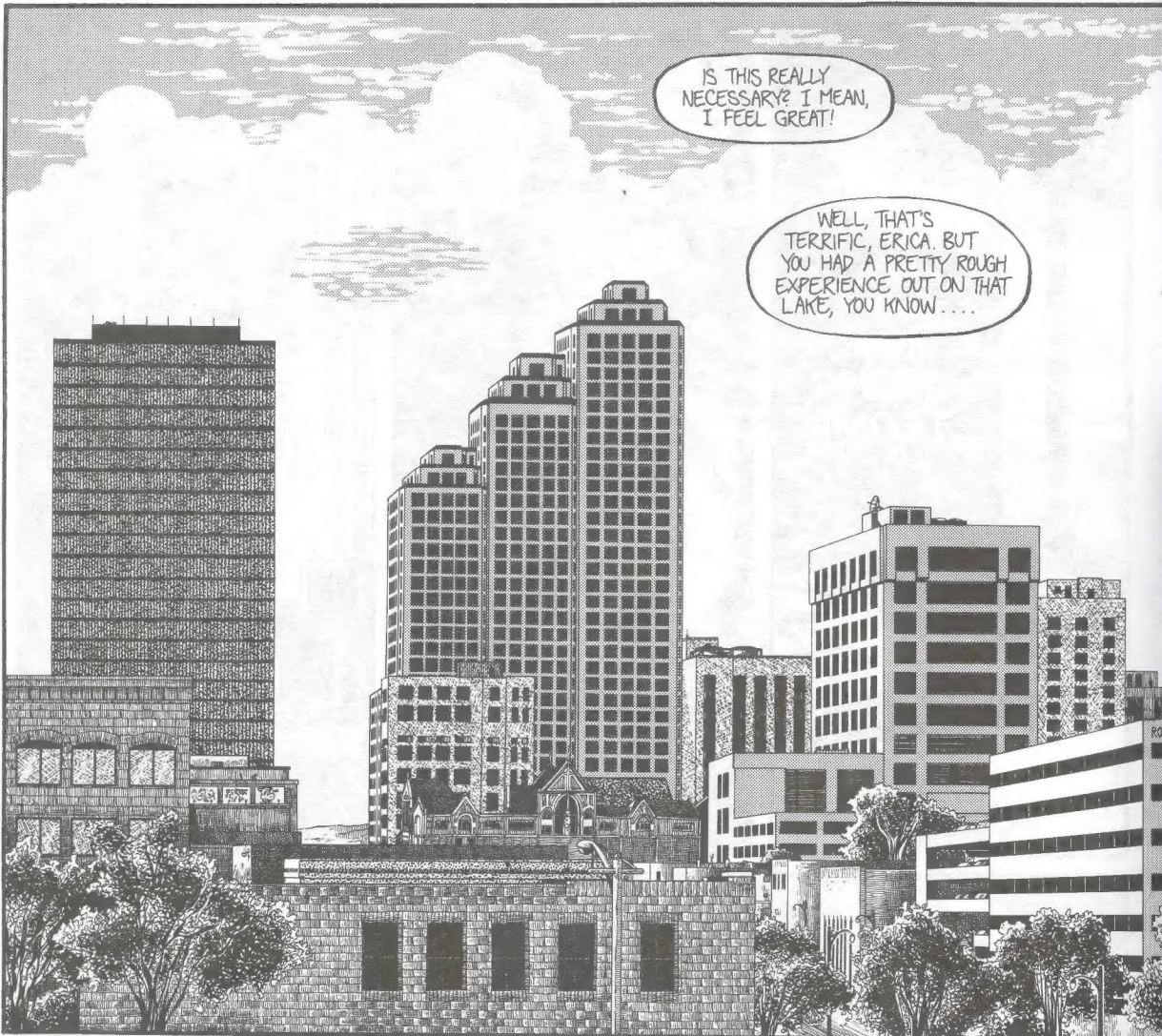
HOLY  
SHIT!

I'M SORRY I  
MISSED YOU. JUST  
WANTED TO LET YOU  
KNOW WE'LL BE  
DISCHARGING ERICA  
TOMORROW AF-  
TERNOON...










IS THIS REALLY  
NECESSARY? I MEAN,  
I FEEL GREAT!

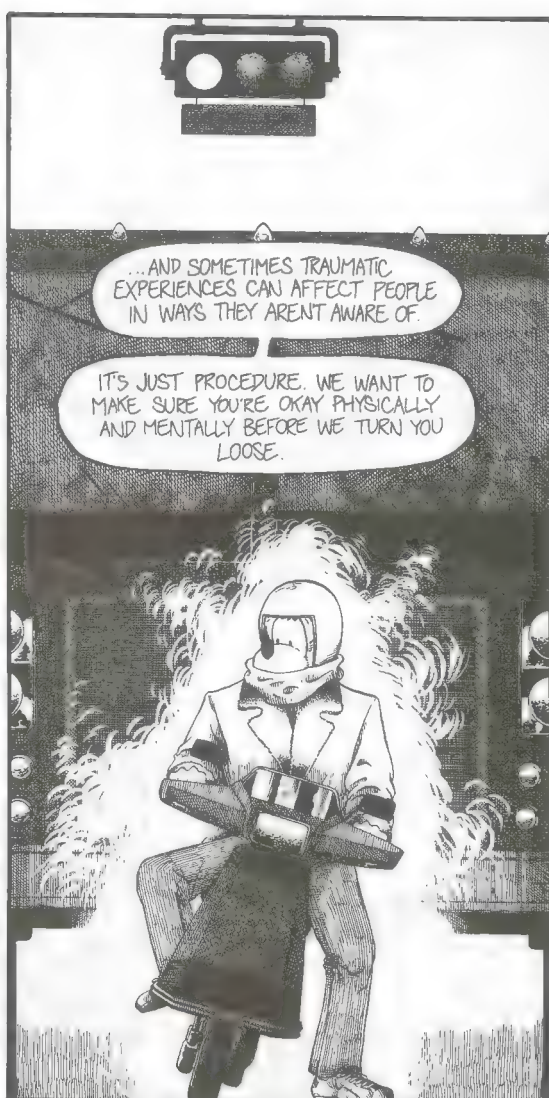
WELL, THAT'S  
TERRIFIC, ERICA. BUT  
YOU HAD A PRETTY ROUGH  
EXPERIENCE OUT ON THAT  
LAKE, YOU KNOW....



AND BE ABLE TO  
ADD AN EXTRA TREAT  
TO THE BILL.

WELL, YOU'RE THE  
DOCTOR, DOCTOR.





...AND SOMETIMES TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES CAN AFFECT PEOPLE IN WAYS THEY AREN'T AWARE OF.

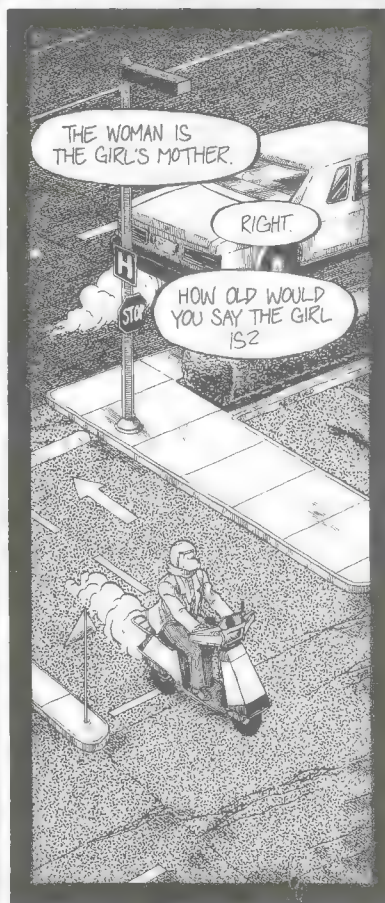
IT'S JUST PROCEDURE. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE OKAY PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY BEFORE WE TURN YOU LOOSE.



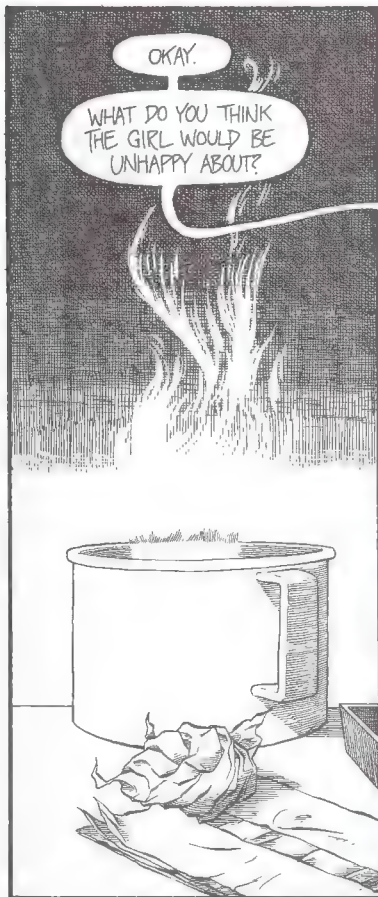
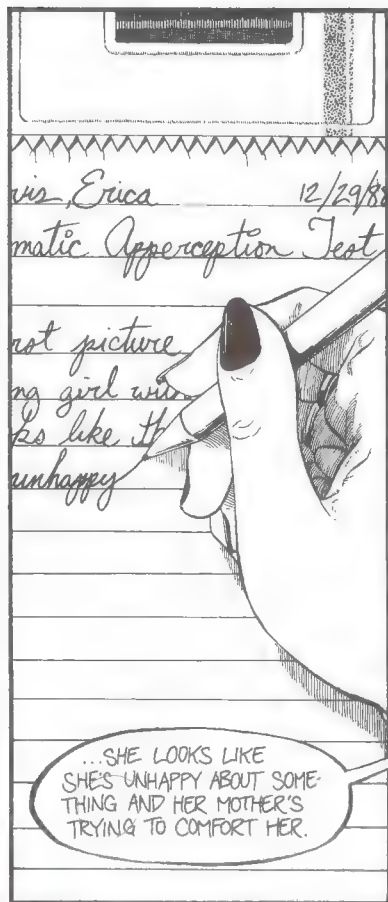
HEH, HEH. THIS WON'T TAKE MORE THAN A FEW MINUTES...

WHAT I'VE GOT IS A STACK OF PICTURES, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS...

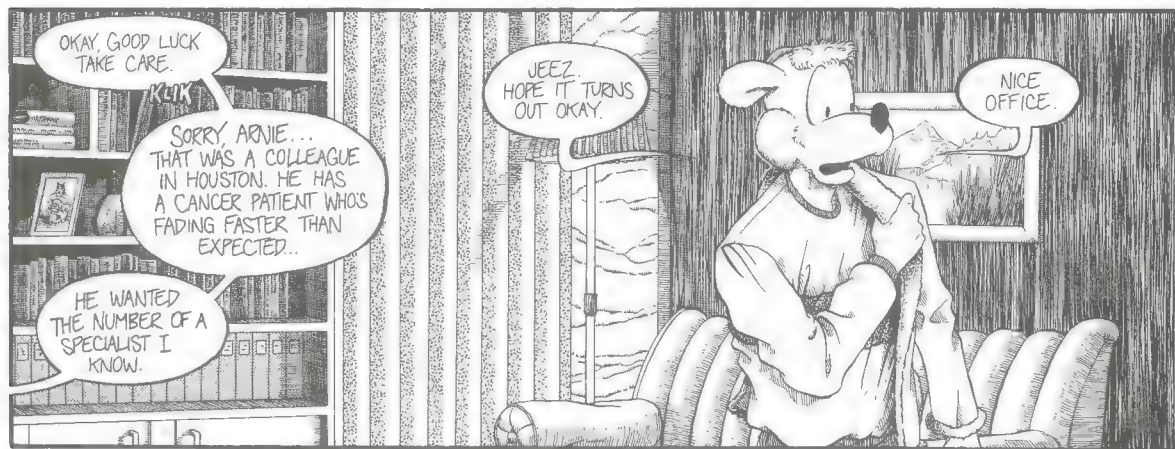








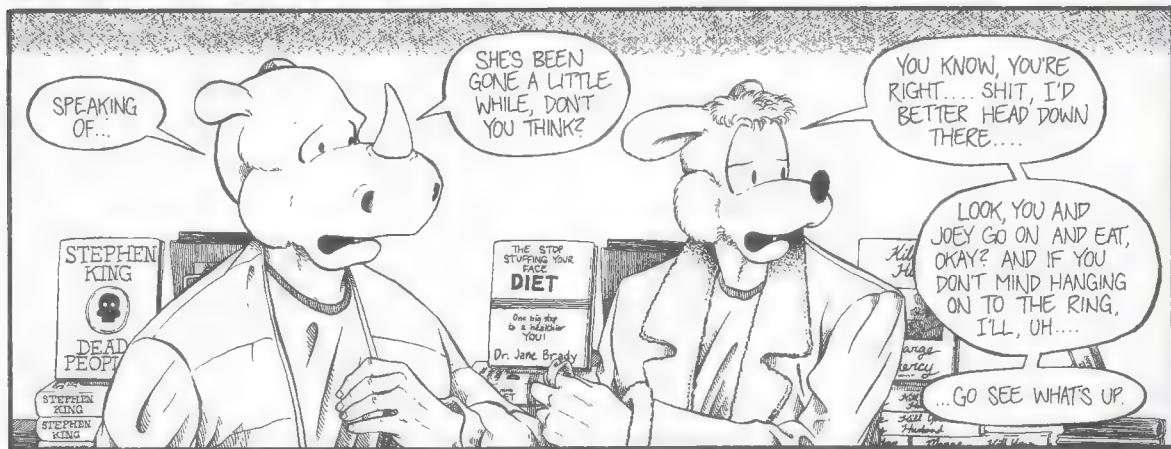
















JESUS CHRIST, ERICA...

YOU STUPID BITCH...

WHY DID YOU RUN  
LIKE THAT? WHAT IF HE  
SAW YOU...?

...FOLLOWED YOU?

SHOULDA STAYED  
WITH THE GUYS.

WHAT IF HE KNOWS

EXACTLY

WHERE  
YOU ARE?

10-20-17



I-I'M  
SORRY?

I SAID ARE  
YOU ALL RIGHT,  
DEAR?

YOU LOOKED  
LIKE YOU WERE  
ABOUT TO BE  
REALLY  
SICK OR  
SOMETHING.



OH...

NO, I'LL BE FINE...  
JUST THIS MIGRAINE THAT  
KEEPS COMING BACK

OOOH...  
WELL, IF YOU  
LIKE, I'VE  
GOT SOME  
PRESCRIPTION  
STRENGTH  
MIDOL...

IT WORKS,  
I TELL YOU!  
MY HUSBAND  
EVEN TAKES  
IT FOR HIS MI-  
GRAINES!



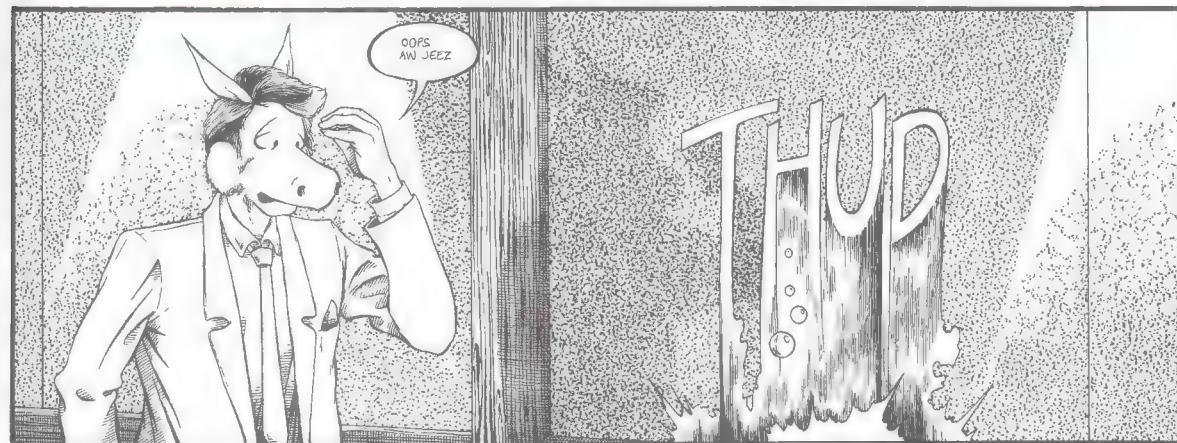
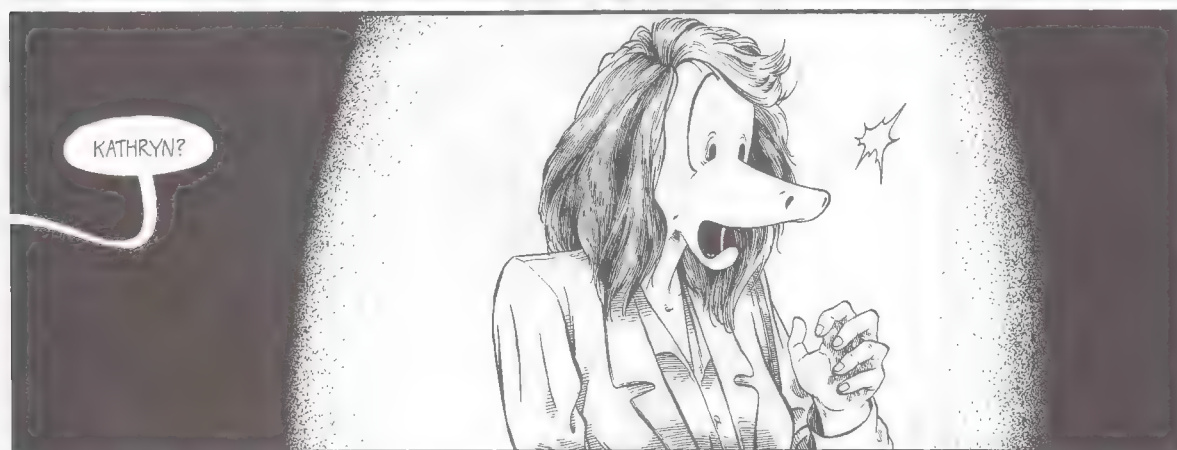
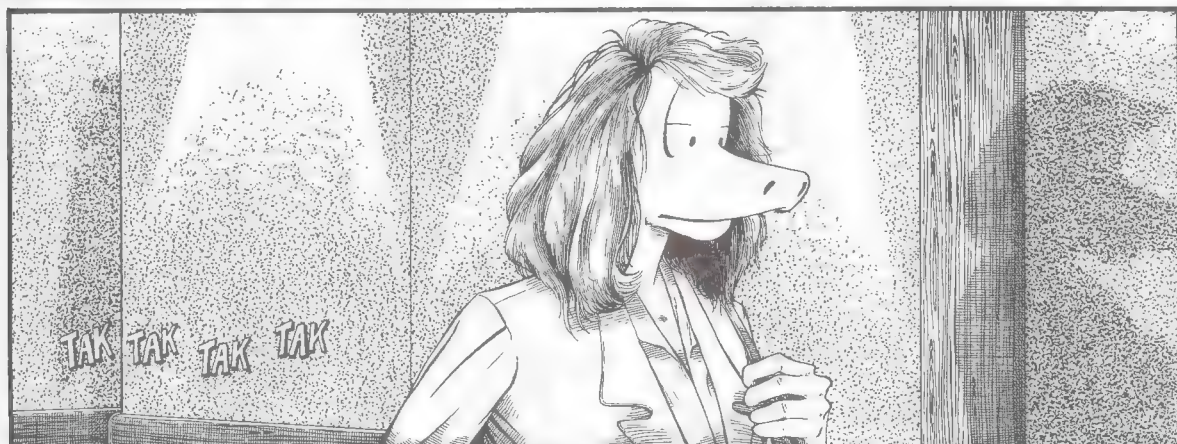
NO...NO...THANK  
YOU, THOUGH.

OKAY, SUIT  
YOURSELF.  
I'M TELLING YOU.  
I MAY HAVE ME A  
HEADACHE BEFORE  
ALL THIS SHOPPING  
IS DONE...



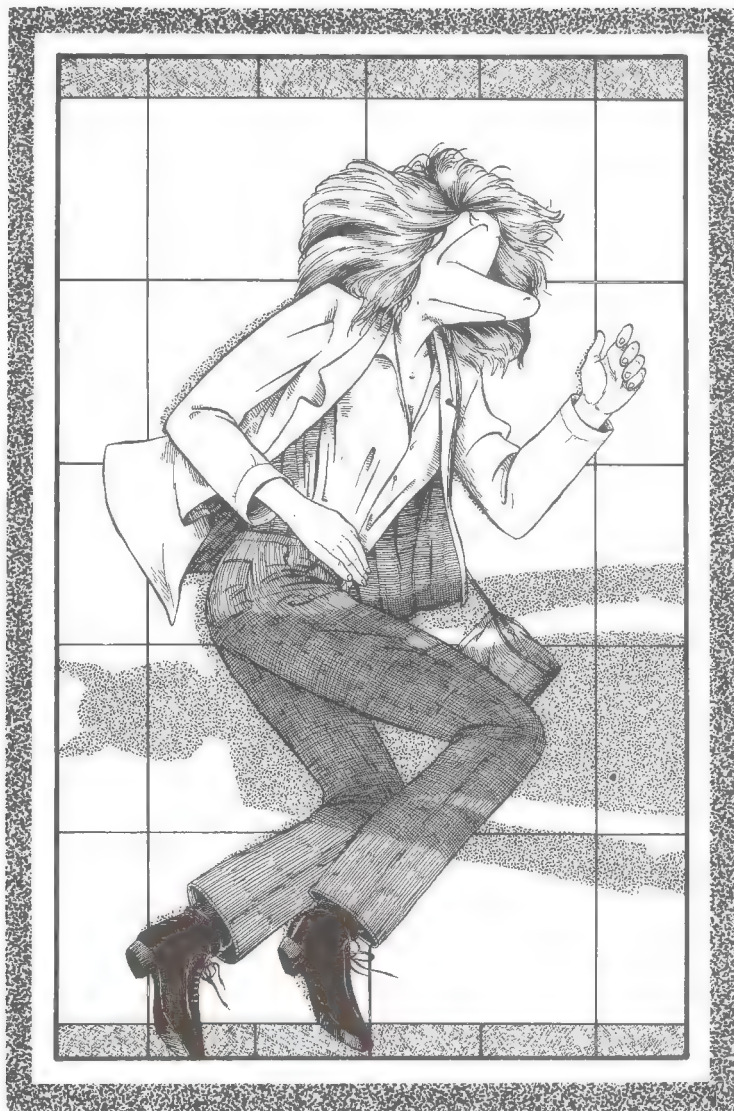








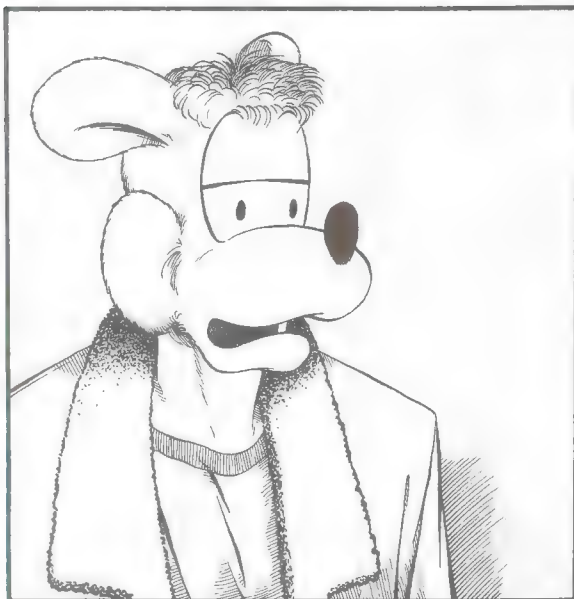
OH MY  
GOODNESS!



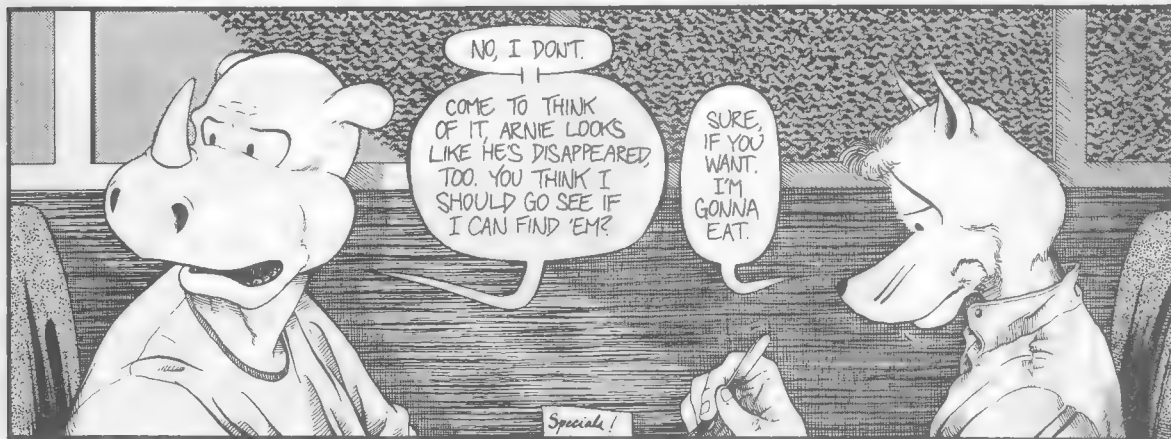
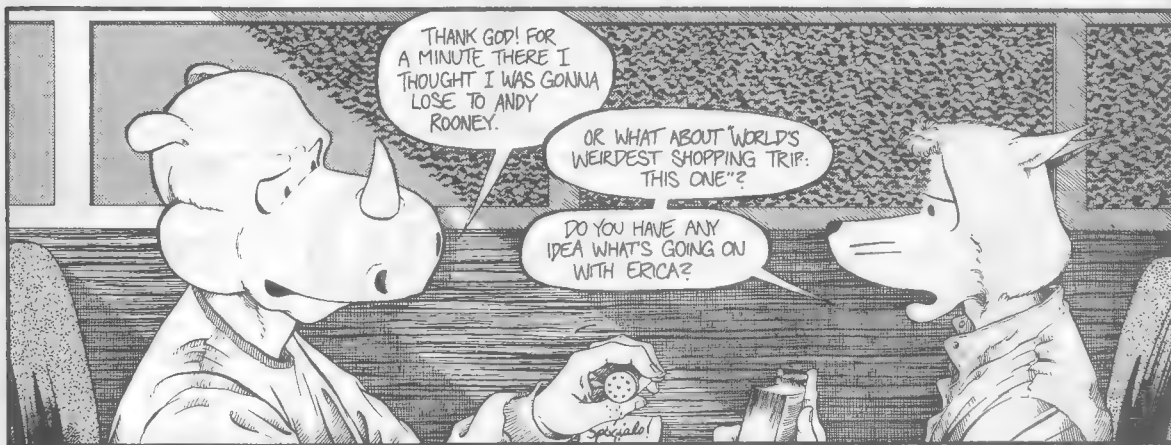
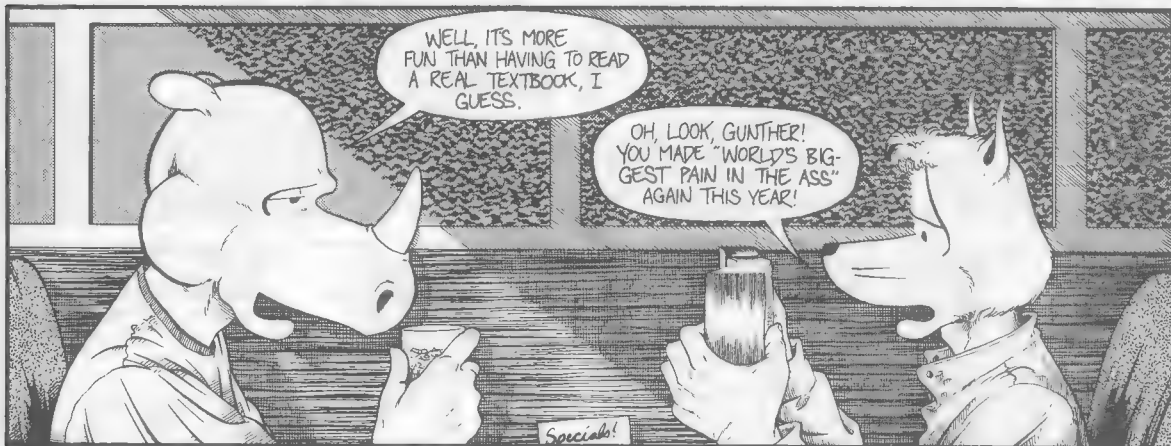
SHE'LL BE ALL  
RIGHT—SHE'S JUST FAINTED.  
SHE HASN'T BEEN FEELING  
WELL LATELY.

I JUST NEED TO  
TAKE HER HOME AND  
PUT HER TO BED.





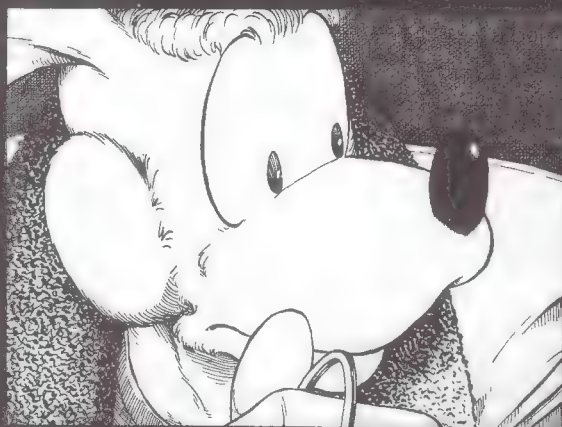
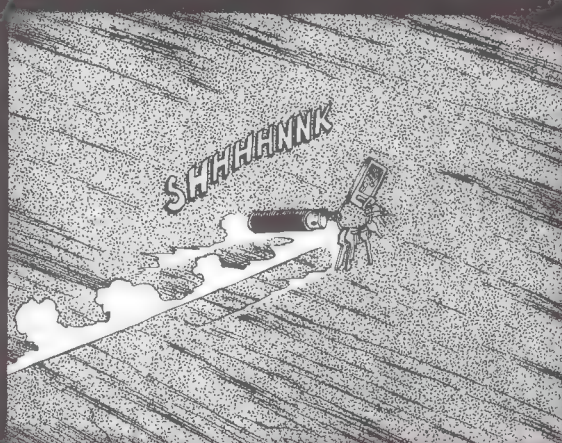
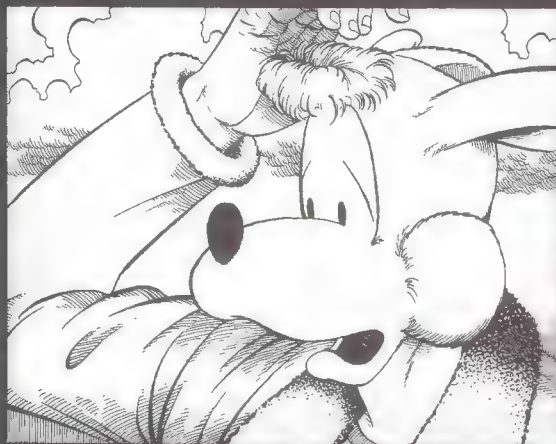




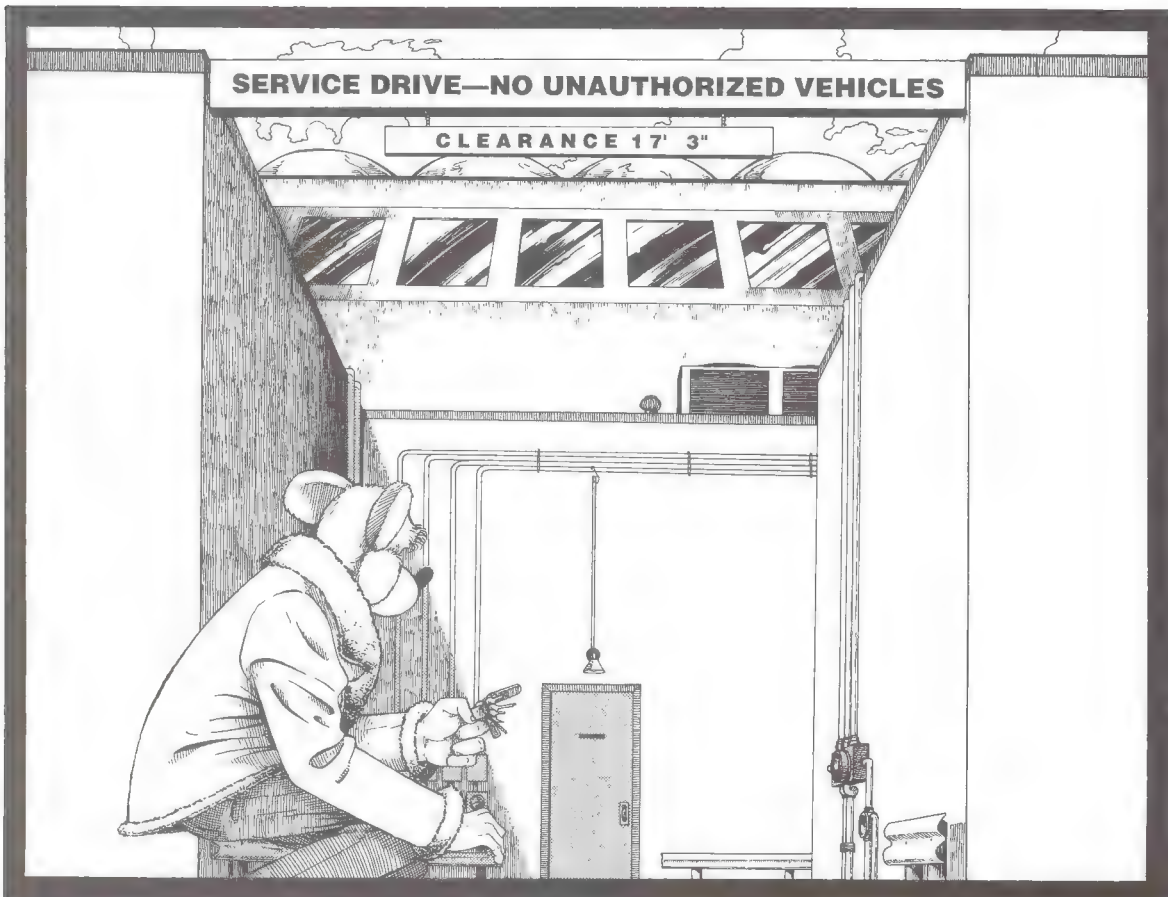




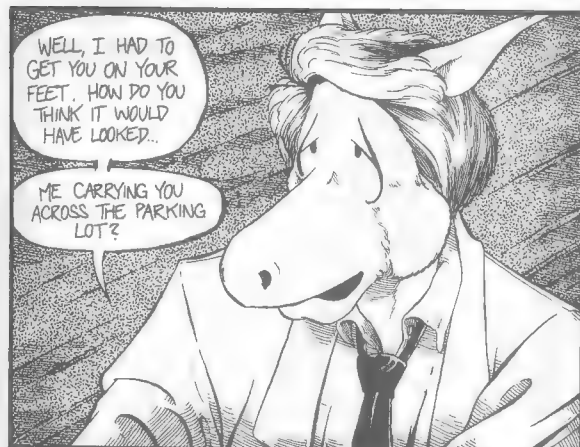




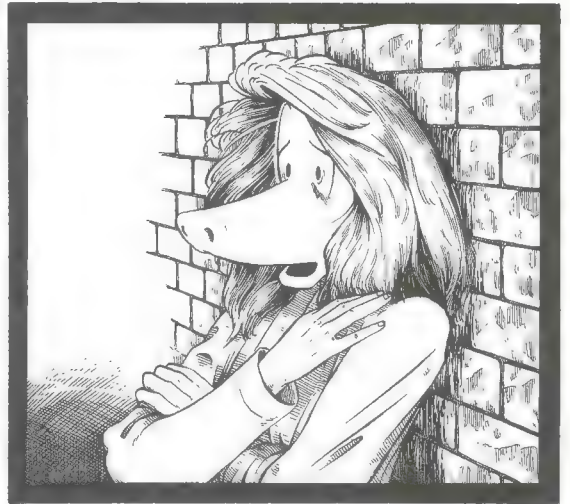














# HEPCATS

P.O. BOX 27157  
AUSTIN, TX 78755-2157  
hepcats@eden.com

## SPECIAL NOTICE SO EVERYONE DOESN'T HAVE A COW

In an effort to get dressed more on schedule (we apologize for having fallen a little behind) this issue will not contain the *Way of the Word* backup installment. *Way of the Word* will return next issue, and the installments in issues 6 and 7 will run six pages rather than the customary four to even everything out. Thanks for bearing with us.

We begin this issue with a good long letter that recalls the old self-publishing days, when fans would prattle on at length and we'd just have a good time. Shane here, however, takes the honors for composing the most fawning piece of mail I've ever received as a comic creator. Some of it may sorely test your digestive system, but I had a good belly-laugh at his "President of the United States" comment. Hey, let him say his piece! I'm a Cartoonist of the People, dammit.

Dear Martin,

Let me tell you a story. It's a long one, but I'll try to keep it as short as possible.

First, a brief history lesson. I first discovered *Hepcats* in *Hero Illustrated* #8 [1994]. In the "On the Edge" section they had an interesting three-page article about the book, an interview with you and pictures of various covers. Upon reading this, I knew I would have to start collecting the book (at the time I was dropping superhero shit off my list like flies and was buying books that were more "novel-like" in story; i.e. *Cerebus*, *Bone*, etc.), but it didn't become "etched in stone" until I read the review of *Hepcats* #11 in the "Hero Review" section the following month. (The review was good, but what decided it for me was the panel they'd shown for #11: Erica holding Anneke's hand while she lay unconscious on the bed. The art was so moving and powerful that I knew *Hepcats* was a must-have book. And it is. And it's taken a lot of money and a lot of searching, but my collection is nearly complete! WHOO!)

Fast forward to 1997. The Heroes' Con in Charlotte, NC, was my first—but not last—attendance at such a function, even though I've been collecting comics for some fourteen years now, and the three main reasons I went was: you, Terry Moore, and Kurt Busiek; three of my all-time favorite creators—my heroes, if you will.

Anyway, after weeks of saving up money, sorting through hundreds of comics to pick out which ones I wanted signed, and then, on the day in question, hitting the road at six on Friday morning with my brother and cousin, my stomach a ball of nerves and excitement (I was, after all, about to meet three heroes of mine), I arrived at the convention center two hours before "opening time" with a smile on my face and an ungodly urge to pee for the fourth or fifth time that morning.

After getting our tickets, we got into line and began the (agony of agonies!) two hour wait. I was very excited, almost to the point of exploding, and I remember saying to my family, "The first person I'm gonna go see when I get in is Martin Wagner."

"Who?" Bryan, my brother, asked with a confused look on his face.

Forgive him, Martin. He doesn't read comics; he collects them. So he wouldn't know you or *Hepcats*.

At 12:02 P.M. we were finally allowed into the showroom. I was shocked! The place was huge, and I knew right away that my plan for seeking you out first, Martin, would have to be postponed until I had finished "touring" the place first. But that didn't happen either because, right off the bat, I ran into Terry Moore's and Kurt Busiek's table!

[A couple hundred hyperbolic words about meeting Terry Moore and Kurt Busiek deleted for space.]

I grinned. I had met (and spoken to!) two of the three people that have, literally, changed my life and had come out alive. Now all I had to do was find Number Three.

I wandered around the north part of the showroom first. And lucky I did because within twenty minutes I came across your table, Martin. I only wish Matt had been there to take my picture just then! The first thing I saw was you (I'd seen pics of you before, Martin, and I have to say that, no, you don't look like a 12-year-old anymore. Har har) and my jaw literally dropped open. *There he is! There he is!* was all I could think just then.

Anyway, I must have looked like a fool to you, Martin, because, as I'm standing there in the flow of traffic with my mouth open and just staring at you, you looked over at me and (ha ha) made a cruel imitation of me. I knew two things right then: (1) you were obviously a cool, fun-loving kind of guy and (2) I had better close my mouth before I started to drool and look even stupider than I al-

ready did.

I walked over, nervous (but not anywhere near as much as with my other two heroes), and began looking at all the different *Hepcats* stuff on the table—I didn't say anything, at first, because there was a gentleman already there ahead of me. I saw it immediately, and my heart, I swear to God, actually skipped a beat. I picked it up slowly, thinking, *Yes! At long, LONG last I've found you!*

It was *Hepcats* #11, the issue that had hooked me three years before! And here it was. In my hands. At last. (And, yes, Martin, it was a great "read.") The man left, and I turned to tell you that you'd just made my entire day when along comes another guy who says he's heard of *Hepcats* but has never read it—can you imagine?!

"Is this a good book?" he stupidly asked.

And before you could even reply I said to him, a little defensively, "It's an excellent book. If you like *Strangers in Paradise* (or even if you don't), you'll like *Hepcats*."

With that you outstretched your hands at me, shrugged your shoulders with a smile and said, "There ya go."

After the man had gone I wasted no time introducing myself and telling you how big a fan I was. Now, after reading all the stuff I've mentioned earlier, I'm sure you're beginning to see that, with you, Martin, I was completely at ease. You were so outgoing, and very easy to talk to. It was almost like I'd known you for years! I wonder if reading *Hepcats* is the reason for this? Hmmmm.

Anyway, we talked for at least a good hour (sorry about that, but I enjoyed it!) and I have to say that it saddened my heart to see only a few people stop by your table in all that time because *Hepcats* deserves the kind of attention that *Bone*, *SIP*, *Leave It to Chance* and *Astro City* get—maybe even more so.

After signing my books, I eventually got around to pulling out my Thank You drawing and handed it to you, smiling like a fool. I can only say, "Thank you" for your reaction and kind words about that drawing, Martin. (And by the way, did you notice the little note I wrote on the back of it?)

"Wow!" you shouted, eyes wide, and I'm struck again by how selfish we fans really are (well, I guess "selfish" isn't a good word because the fans do show their support by buying your stuff, but to me that just isn't the point). "This is great!"

"Uhhhh," I croaked. "Not as good as your work!"



me. "I know where this is goin' when I get home."

(Later, after I family and I were leaving, I told them what you had said and jokingly said, "He told me he knew where it was goin' when he got back home. Probably right in the trash." We had a good laugh.)

So anyway we're talking about the future of Hepcats and I'm asking all the usual stupid fanboy questions (including the dreaded "What the hell is Erica, anyway?" and your hilarious response being "I don't know what the fuck Erica is. Erica is Erica." Sorry, martin. I really don't know *why* I asked that stupid question because it isn't even important to me), and along comes Matt. I excitedly told him who you were (I've been trying to get him to read your book for some time now, Martin) and immediately started pressuring him to buy something (hell, I even offered to buy him an issue just so he'd have a copy of *Hepcats*, but in the end he bought his own: the reprint of issue one—and you'll be happy to know, Martin, that he enjoyed it—I knew he would. After all, I'm the one that got him hooked on *SIP*.)

Then Matt asked you if you would main getting your picture taken with me.

"Sure," you said, standing up. "Why don't you come around the table and stand beside me."

To me, this is like being told to stand next to the President of the United States. The whole time I'm thinking, *Holy cow! I'm standing beside Martin Wagner!*

And if that wasn't enough you said something like, "Let's be diplomatic about this," and shook my hand!

FLASH! The magic moment captured forever!!

Then Matt got his turn.

"Mr. GQ," Matt snickers, doing the old "buddy" pose.

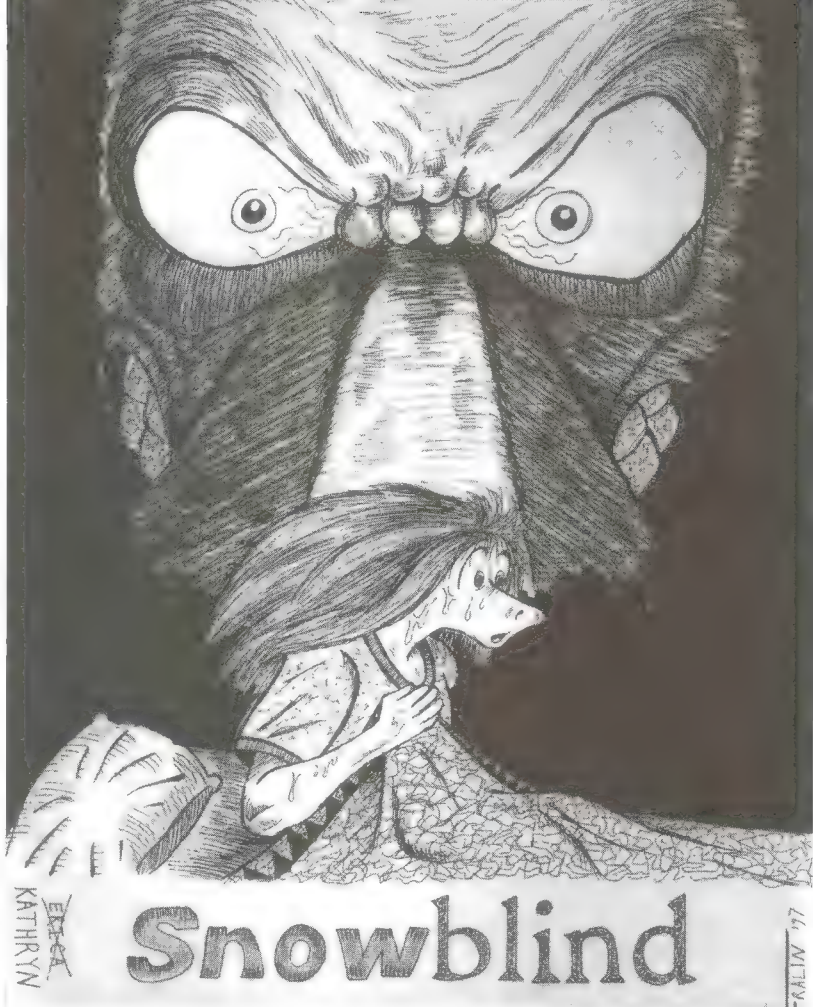
FLASH!

Thanks, Martin. You're one cool, hep cat!

In the end I left your table with all three reprints, the special ed. of issue two (I loved the Lil' Hepcats tale! You draw an awesome dragon, Martin!), issue eleven, the bagged issue zero with the *Radio Hepcats* CD and the tpb of *Snowblind* (and by the way, Martin, a million "Thank you"s for drawing Erica on the inside front page for me! She's my favorite!!), all of which you signed for me!

All of it is wonderful: the notes at the beginning of the reprints, the gorgeous color in #0 (although, as I told you at the con, I still prefer your beautiful b&w—however, a colored annual or Lil' Hepcats story, or something, would be nice to see!), the personalized sketch...and the CD!

This was *truly* worth the money, Martin, and to think I had agonized over whether or not I should have bought it! How *stupid* I was! This CD *rocks*, and it rocks *hard*!



And the thing I like doing with it most is playing certain tracks with certain scenes in certain issues of *Hepcats*. For example, because issue eleven is so sad and has no dialogue I played tracks one—"Wake Up (The Sleep Song)" by Mistle Thrush—and seven ("Erica/Kathryn's Decision" by William McGinney—hire this guy for the *Hepcats* animated movie—hey, I can dream!) to obtain the ultimate "feel" of the issue, and boy did it work!! I swear to God I almost cried while listening to Mistle Thrush and looking at these scenes: [A whole paragraph of #11 spoilers deleted for the benefit of new readers.] VERY MOVING STUFF, MARTIN!!!

Other examples are track five ("Infant Phenomenon" by No-Man), which went well with issue two, especially the scenes in the strip club; track four ("Unhittable" by Soul Whirling Somewhere), which goes excellently with the dream sequence in issue twelve, and track six ("After Glory" by Visible Shivers, a cool "buddy" song), which goes well with any issue of 'Cats with the gang hanging out together. I was very impressed with the whole package and can only ask, when is Vol. Two coming out??!

Well, believe it or not, I'm done—hey, you're the one who told me to drop you a line! I just want to say what an *honor* it was to meet you, Martin! With-

out a doubt you made my trip worth while! You are truly a wonderful person, and I wish you and all the gang from *Hepcats* nothing but the best in the future! You are all family to me, and I hope to see you again next year—you better be there, or I'll start stalking you, boy-o!

**SHANE FRALIN**  
WALTERBORO, SC

*Folks, I think he means it.*

Dear Martin,

As many of your readers write, I've just read your comics (the *Snowblind* hardcover and the Antarctic Press issues) and I've just been hooked by your characters, especially by Erica (how strange, is it?). The fact is that I started reading the book noticing how interesting your storytelling structure was, then I gradually became bewitched by the common and little events of the daily routine you so skillfully inserted. I especially became enraged with Erica's brother when they confronted each other at the diner and he doesn't understand what her sister experienced (or perhaps what I thought she experienced: I actually did not read the last two *Hepcats* issues, so I don't know if some new lights were thrown). How stupid he was. How selfish he was to judge in that way her sister. After the



age quantity of comics I read and am still reading (I work in a comics distributor and I sometimes write some), I felt very moved, especially by her final confession of the fake suicide.

I'm living in the North of Italy in a nice city called Bologna, very famous for her meals, high level of culture and friendliness. I have been living here for three years (I was actually born in Treviso, a city near Venice) because after University and the civil service (unfortunately in Italy the military service is compulsory, but luckily we have the opportunity to may choose the civil service, instead), I found two jobs here, both in the comics fields, as translator for the Italian division of Marvel (but at the moment I am not working for them anymore) and in a big comics distributor.

At the moment I am writing some short stories that were able to be published in some anthologies and sometimes some comics, although the comics situation in Italy is very hard (there are really very few publishers who are dealing with Italian products, since we are experiencing a real invasion from USA and from Japan) and I am thinking with some friends of mine to make a little company to publish some stuff on our own. It is really hard because the bureaucracy is nearly killing us (especially from a financial point of view) and the search for an economical printer is very hard. But we are very determined and we want to succeed in doing it very badly.

I wish you all the luck with this new adventure of yours.

Ciao.

**OMAR MARTINI**

BOLOGNA, ITALY

Congratulations, Omar, and good luck on your self-publishing venture. I occasionally find I have to reiterate my position that I am still a staunch proponent of self-publishing; the fact that it didn't work for me in the long run should not be interpreted to mean self-publishing is not viable. It's down to the individual, and you feel you can handle all of the chores—artistic as well as administrative—that self-publishing demands without finding yourself spread too thin, then go for it!

I'm not sure if you remember my other letter I sent you, so I will once again say that you are a very talented writer and that I love *Hepcats* more than I can ever describe. My name is Kurtis Evans, and I am a poet. I've written many poems although I am fairly young...and there was one poem that I wrote that just might coincide with Erica's life...although I am only assuming, because I haven't read *Snowblind* yet, and I don't know what kind of abuse she suffers. I am going to include the poem with this letter...a warning, it's very, very long. Here it is:

### Friendship Street

There's very little that's different about

it. No matter how many years go by, It will always remain the same.

There will always be children running down its sidewalks, There will always be laughter, And secretly, there will always be tears. Friendship Street.

The times spent there,

By many, Defies time and existence.

Running long and hard,

And then biking,

Wishing for the day to last forever,

These moments define the time.

Free and eternal,

Innocent and forgiving,

There was no weight on his shoulders,

then, Just the wind at his back.

The street is not paved,

It is brick,

It is a gate to a different time.

But while the children run outside and

laugh, While they look for birds and

lost coins, There is a dark side.

The parents fight.

"John, why don't you get off your lazy

ass and get a job?" "Because I'm

TIRED, damn it!"

"Well, if you hadn't stayed out so late

last night, getting drunk with your

IDIOT friends,

That wouldn't have happened, now

would it?" "GOD DAMN IT!! Just shut

up!

SHUT THE HELL UP!"

But she doesn't.

And they argue,

And he hits her.

But he does get up.

He gets up to go to the fridge and pull

out a beer. But his son,

His 8 year old son doesn't notice.

He's outside, playing hide and go seek,

He's still having the time of his life,

Here on Friendship Street.

Then one day,

When it's raining,

He stays inside and watches his father.

He watches his father beat his mother

to a pulp. He doesn't do a thing about

it, though.

He is, after all, a kid.

Then his father turns on him.

First a few words,

Then a spanking,

Then a slap.

Then a punch,

And soon, blood flows.

And she defends him.

His GOD DAMNED mother defends his

father, And she is punched,

And soon,

Friendship Street isn't a place to go out

of boredom, It is an escape.

His friends ask what happened,

And then his teachers,

And all he can do is lie,

Lie and dread the coming winter,

When Friendship Street won't take him.

Then, one day,

At the tender age of 10,

He spills orange juice on his father's

bed. And he wakes up in a different

bed.

A hospital bed.

"Oh, son, I'm so sorry..." his father

starts. But he can't forgive him,

He could never again forgive him.

Time goes on,

And finally, the divorce papers are

signed, And he continues to grow

older.

One day,

He realizes that he is no longer the 10

year old child, But he is the 17 year old

going to visit his dad, His dad who is

dying of cancer.

Well, you deserved it, you bastard.

You motherfucking bastard.

It is the first time that he had seen his

father since he was 11. Six years, and

his father is so small... His eyes are

sunken in,

His lips are cracked,

He has gone blind.

"Son, is it you? Is it really you?"

Now the tide has turned.

Now his FATHER was the one in the

hospital bed. "Yeah dad. It's me."

Then they talk.

His father calls them the good ol' days.

The days of Friendship Street.

Sure, he drank back then,

But now, he seemed to LIVE in the

bottle. And then, half an hour later,

He asks the question:

"Please, can you please forgive me,

son?" And silence.

"Son? Are you still there?"

Silence.

"Dad...dad, I-I forgive you."

And he leaves his father in that room,

On that bed,

Forever.

He left with a silent question, though.

Do I really mean it?

Still more time flies.

From 17 to 32,

And he still doesn't know.

And all that is left of Friendship Street

is a memory. Then he goes back.

He left the day of graduation,

And he promised himself that he would

never return. And he didn't, not for the

10 year reunion, Not for the passing of

his grandmother,

Nothing.

15 years,

And then, he wakes up one morning,

And he feels something.

He buys a ticket,

And he flies back.

He walks down Friendship Street again,

For the first time in so many years...

And he sees running children,

Laughing, playing street football,

And he sees their parents on their

porches, And he realizes: only one

thing has changed. Now, he is an

outsider looking in.

The street was still brick,

The houses still stood,

The only difference was the children.

Sure, the TOWN had changed.

New buildings,

New businesses,

But good ol' Friendship Street

remained. He walked up to his old

house.

His mother no longer lived there,



She left when he did.  
 He knocks on the door,  
 And an old man answers.  
 Are you my father? he thinks.  
 No, your father is dead.  
 He says his hellos, and asks the old  
 man: "Do you mind if I come in?  
 You see, I used to live here,  
 And it's been 15 years,  
 And I want to see how things look.  
 So...do you mind?"  
 The old man, his name is Frank Speller,  
 Frank opens the door.  
 He walks in, and goes straight up stairs,  
 And he sees his old room.  
 "Look," he said,  
 "You can still see the blood stain on the  
 wall. Mom must have spent HOURS  
 trying to wash it out, But there it is.  
 That happened when my Dad put me  
 in the hospital, In case you're wonder-  
 ing, Mr. Speller.  
 And look over here...  
 My initials are right here,  
 Carved in the doorway.  
 When my dad saw that one,  
 I swear to God, he nearly broke my  
 hand. And look..."  
 But he can't finish.  
 He falls to his knees,  
 And he feels like crying,  
 But he can't...his father beat all his tears  
 out of him years ago... Does he forgive  
 his father?  
 How can he?  
 His father did the most perverse thing  
 possible... He beat his son's innocence  
 right out of him, Ruining the happiest  
 days of his life,  
 Ruining Friendship Street.  
 There's blood in the gutters of  
 Friendship Street, Blood that will never  
 be washed away.  
 He gets up.  
 "Look...I-I appreciate this, but I have to  
 go..." And before Frank can say a word,  
 He flies down the stairs and out of the  
 house, Away from Friendship Street...  
 Away from the innocence,  
 Away from the blood that has been  
 spilled. No, nothing has changed,  
 Except now, he is on the outside  
 looking in. He runs from Friendship  
 Street,  
 But then, he stops,  
 And he turns.  
 The sun begins to set,  
 And the children are called in...  
 They don't want to go.  
 Some because they are having fun,  
 Others because they know what lurks  
 inside. No, nothing has changed,  
 And nothing ever will.

In case you're wondering, I've  
 never been abused. I just know what it's  
 like through reading and through the  
 news. If you would be so kind, I would  
 love to hear what you have to think about  
 the poem...even if you don't like it. I have  
 a page on the net...on this page I have  
 about 20 poems, and that's growing ev-  
 ery day. I also have a link to your page  
 there. I don't know how many people will  
 be seeing my page, but perhaps some-

one will take interest and discover  
 Hepcats. If you're interested, I'll give you  
 the link as well as the address. <http://members.aol.com/KEvans0008/index.html>

The page also includes a Daily  
 Rant page. Tomorrow or Monday, I will  
 write something about Hepcats. Talk to  
 you later!

## KURTIS EVANS

*I don't usually get this sort of thing. Thank  
 you.*

Dear Martin:

It was wonderful to read in Pre-  
 views that Hepcats would be appearing  
 again, but after finding the charming is-  
 sue zero, I had a terribly hard time find-  
 ing subsequent issues (and this in New  
 York City!). But finally, yesterday I was able  
 to find issues 1 & 2. Last night I had a  
 lovely time becoming reacquainted with  
 these old friends.

I would add at this point that  
 I've been with you from near the begin-  
 ning, one of those readers who came on  
 board after the Cerebus exposure. We  
 actually spoke by phone a few times while  
 I was back in Houston. I've now pur-  
 chased Hepcats 1 three times! I've got  
 the entire first run except for the critical  
 number 11, which I'd come to assume I  
 wouldn't see until it was reprinted by  
 Antarctic.

But looking at the fine print on  
 the inside back cover of 1 & 2, I see you  
 have some remaining Double Diamond  
 stock, including 11 and Special Ed 2 (I  
 know it's materialistic and fetishistic for  
 me to want the latter since I have the  
 original and the new reprint, but...). But I  
 don't know how long the new books have  
 been on the stand or how old that offer  
 is. Could you please let me know ASAP  
 whether you still have those two books  
 available? If you do I'll send off a check  
 immediately. But I need to know as soon  
 as possible... I've just lost my job and only  
 have access to this e-mail address  
 through Friday the 11th.

Welcome back, having sur-  
 vived your tribulations personal and pro-  
 fessional to emerge stronger than ever,  
 and I look forward to hearing from you  
 soon.

## STEVE SMITH NEW YORK, NY

*All material on the mail order page is  
 available until, basically, you no longer  
 see it there any more. There are a few  
 items I have such low stock on that I do  
 not advertise them in the comic book;  
 these things I generally only take to cons  
 and such.*

Dear Mr. Wagner,

First off, let me thank you for  
 coming to the Heroes Con in Charlotte.  
 We don't get many big comic shows  
 down here in the south and most of the  
 ones that do happen center on science

fiction rather than comics. It was a plea-  
 sure to meet you and talk comics with  
 you. I was disappointed not to be able  
 to get a few more items autographed by  
 you on Sunday. I never could find you so  
 I assume that you had to leave.

Secondly, I wanted to ask you  
 about the piece you did for the auction.  
 Entitled, fittingly enough, "The Last  
 Piece" it will look great in my house as I  
 was fortunate enough to have my girl-  
 friend purchase it for me. I thought you  
 might like to know that it went for  
 \$170.00, and we had several people  
 come up to us after the show and con-  
 gratulate us on getting it. I was curious  
 as to whether you had ever used the idea  
 in a book before or even where the idea  
 for it came from? How long did it take  
 you to complete it? Any information you  
 provide will be appreciated.

Finally, I wish you continued  
 success with Hepcats and all future en-  
 deavors. Hope to see you next year in  
 Charlotte. God Bless,

## KIRKPATRICK SPENCER PUTNEY, GA

*The piece Kirk is talking about is an acrylic  
 (that's right, I did an acrylic) I whipped  
 out in about two and a half hours for the  
 Charlotte Fire Department's auction ben-  
 efitting their Burned Children Fund. I've  
 never done that convention "live draw-  
 ing" thing before and I can't say I'll do it  
 again: not that I'm an uncharitable fel-  
 low, but it did turn out to be something  
 of a marathon and it took me away from  
 my table for longer than I'd have  
 wanted—there was a small school of fans  
 swimming around when I got back, look-  
 ing saintly in their patience. As for the  
 subject matter (Joey and Gunther flipping  
 a coin to see who gets the last pizza slice),  
 well, that's one that clearly came from  
 college life. I have a can't-fail formula for  
 instant wealth: open a Domino's three  
 minutes from any dormitory. I first did this  
 drawing, if memory serves, as a sketch  
 for a fan some years ago, but haven't re-  
 visited the image since. Still, when I was  
 up there on stage with a crowd of about  
 200 comics fans looking on like I was  
 some rock star, waiting for me to do  
 something interesting, it all just kind of  
 snapped back into my mind. I'm glad you  
 enjoy it and I'm a little boggled at the  
 price (it was a rush job, gang), but deeply  
 flattered. I'll definitely be back to Char-  
 lotte in 1998!*

Martin,

First off I would like to say what  
 an excellent and enjoyable series  
 Hepcats is.

I bought the reprint of #1 this  
 week, and even though I've read the story  
 in both *The Collegiate Hepcats*, and the  
 Special Edition #1 it was the first book I  
 read out of my pile of new releases. Each  
 time I enjoy a Hepcats tale it seems as if  
 I am visiting with old friends. I am look-  
 ing forward to future issues of Hepcats and  
 firmly believe it is worth the wait for the



quality and great storytelling you create.  
Good luck and thanks again for the stories,

## TODD RUBIN

Hi there,

I have just read my first *Hepcats* this week and I'm happy to say I'm now hooked. I am a comics junkie and once I read something great I stay with it. I have seen *Hepcats* before, but there are just so many books out there it has taken me this long to read an issue. Too bad for me, I would love to have the original back issues, but I do thank you for reprinting the entire back series for new readers like me.

I have started with issue 0 and 1, so I'm ready for the long haul. I will definitely get the tenth anniversary special I saw in *Previews*, I'd love to see what happens at the party.

I do really like black & white books, but issue 0 did look really cool in color. I can't wait to go back to your 0 download page and print a couple pictures on my printer. That's okay isn't it?

The things I really like about *Hepcats* are: 1. Characterization: In just the 2 issues I read, I already care about the characters. That hardly ever happens for me that fast. I can tell this is a very special book. 2. Art: I love your characters' expressions, and you draw really sexy females. 3. Storyline: Hey, I'm an adult and I like to read things I can relate to. I like the intimacy of the book a lot. I can't wait to read the *Snowblind* story arc. It sounds excellent.

Questions: 1. I was going to ask you how your book numbering and stories go, but I learned all that in your web page. Thanks! (not a question, sorry) 2. How many issues will *Hepcats* go? Do you have an ending planned? 3. Will you keep on with the "adult" storylines or tone down a bit and go for a wider audience? (kind of stupid question, sorry) 4. Does issue 0 take place before issue 1 or between issue 12 and 13?

Erica figure: I would like a poseable action figure so I could have her sit at my desk while I work and talk to her. I'd need it no more expensive than \$20. And please make sure you give her those long sexy legs. (Oh yeah)

Well, thanks for the pleasure of *Hepcats*. You have a new fan for life!

## TOM FLYNN

I have some ideas for an ending to *Hepcats*—I know that the last *Hepcats* story will focus on Gunther, the story just hasn't come to me yet. (Though, interestingly, I do know what the last page of the last *Hepcats* story will have on it.) When I was a bright-eyed young self-publisher, I told everyone *Hepcats* would be a 100-issue series. It was basically a figure to give me a light at the end of the tunnel. I now think of *Hepcats* in terms of individual graphic novels, of which three are definitely planned (*Snowblind*; *Glass Heartbeats*; *Way of the World*) and

perhaps one or two after that. It's also important to remember that I don't sit down and consciously choose to do an "adult" (whatever that means; it seems to mean different things to different people—I define "adult" as appealing to adult sensibilities and tastes, while most people seem to think it means just nudity and bad language) story. I do stories that are personal to me and so, really, as much as I love you guys, I'm not thinking a whole lot about what *Hepfans* might "want" when I sit down to create. The work must be honest or it ceases to be meaningful to me, and if it's unmeaningful that will translate into poor quality, which no fan wants. If the stories happen to have content inappropriate for kiddies, well, too bad, folks, get a life, and read the cover advisory while you're at it. (Not to imply you were having a problem with it, Tom, it's just that so many people out there emotionally overreact to things like that. Childish of them, really.)

Dear Martin,

I just want to go on record saying that you should be honored (or is it scared, I'm not sure which) that I'm sending you this letter. Why, you may ask? Well, the real reason is that I NEVER write letters to the comics that I read. I just never do. I read them for entertainment and enjoy them tremendously. I just don't write letters.

Anyway, I wanted to tell you that I enjoy *Hepcats* a lot. I enjoyed on the first run, but it was just really hard to find and with the erratic release schedule, I, to be quite honest, lost interest. But such is not the case now. Now that there will be regular releases, I've added it to my subscription list. There, the trite thing you always hear from the fan. Now, on to something you don't always hear.

I remember your work when you did *Shasta Says*, when you going to school at UH. That strip was THE bright spot in the *Daily Cougar*. All of my friends enjoyed it everyday. I was sorry to hear that you transferred to UT, because that meant no more *Shasta Says*. But you had to do what you had to do, and I respect you for it. But what I really respect more, is your desire to continue striving to fulfill your dream of being a great force in the comic book field (which you will be soon). I can relate to you being able to hold on to your dream, and even after a time of trial and tribulation, that you had the courage to "get back on the horse." as they say, and try again.

You see, not to long ago, I came back to UH to complete my degree and become a "productive member of society." Obviously, since I remember your strip here, I'm not your typical late teens/early-twenties fanboy. I had no clue what I wanted to do with my life and left school and got a job. After three years of soul-searching and personal evaluation, I figured out what I wanted to do with my life. I will graduate with a degree in Journalism, minor in Psychology, in May

1998, which is roughly half way to get a job in advertising.

This wasn't an excuse to pat myself on the back. I was just trying to reinforce, in you, that it is possible to get what you want from life. Just believe in yourself, your dream, and what you are doing about achieving it, and you will make it. Maybe you already realize all this, but hey, everyone could use a little positive reinforcement now and then right?

Well, you keep on putting out *Hepcats* and I'll keep on buying it. And I'll probably keep on enjoying reading it as long as you keep on enjoying bring it to life. And when/if you've taken Gunther, Joey, Erica and Arnie as far as you can; I'll mourn a little, but I'll understand.

Respectfully,

**ERIK NORTON**

HOUSTON, TX

Dear Martin,

I first heard about *Hepcats* back around the time I graduated from college (circa 1992), but could never locate any of the issues. What interested me the most (with not even having seen the comic) was that you had taken your college strip and turned it into a full-fledged comic book. (Oh, and I wanted to do the same thing as well).

When I heard about the issue #0, I immediately picked up it up and loved every page! I laughed thru-out the entire thing because these were the people I knew!

I had heard about *Snowblind* over the Net, thus knew where the story was going in a way. Now I look forward to seeing it completed. You have an excellent, clean art style and a knack with showing characterization (something lacking in many comics these days).

Keep up the good work.

**DAVE McWHORTER**

PS: A quote from *Babylon 5* comes to mind: "Share your second favorite thing in the universe with a friend." I've shared my copies of *Hepcats* with my friends, and all those post-college types enjoyed it!

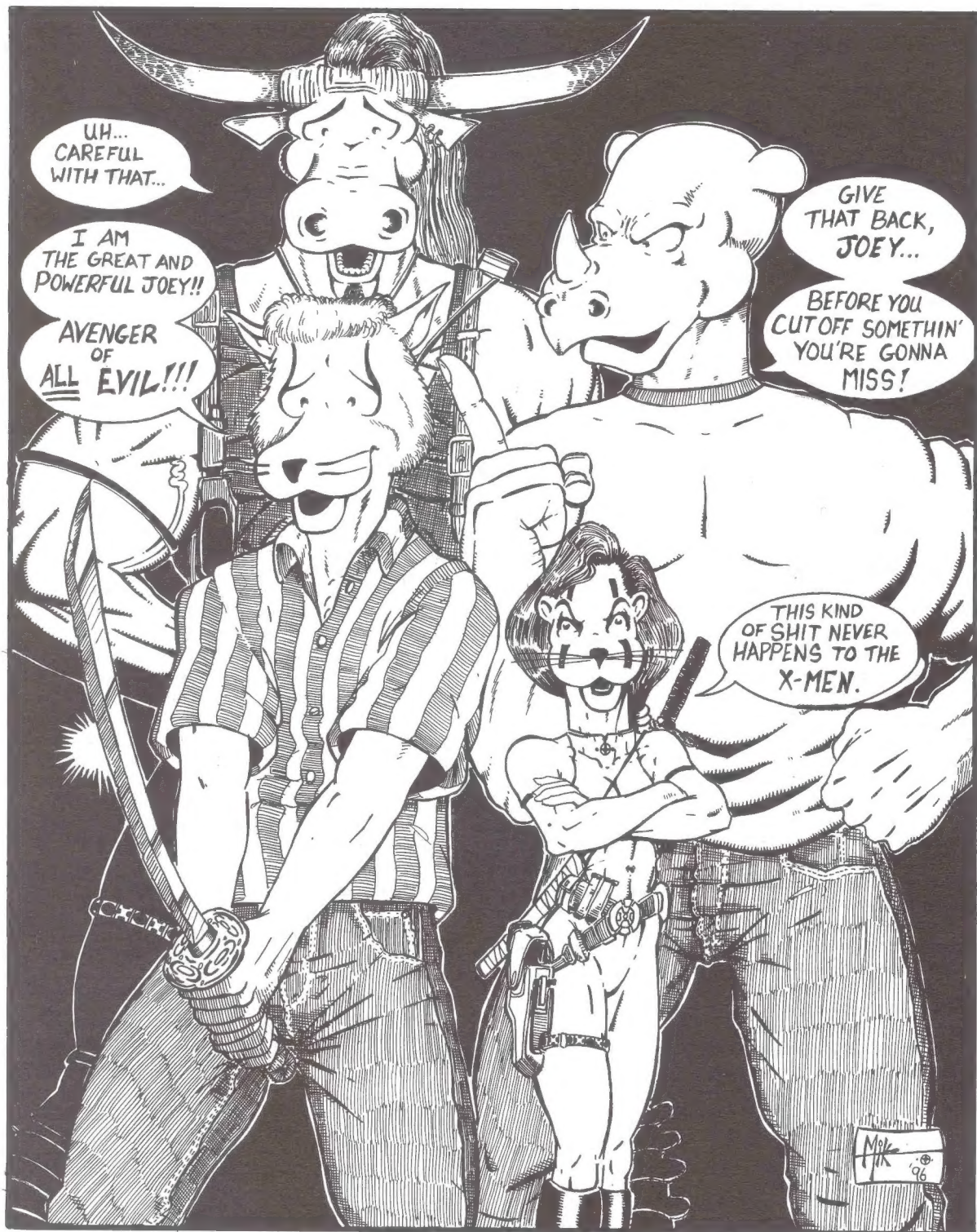
I think at this point I'm supposed to ask what Dave's first-favorite thing is. You know what? As long as he's into *Hepcats*, I don't care!

Don't worry about the speed you publish, we have been waiting this long, a few more months will not kill us. The wait is always well worth it. Are you going to come to Dallas for any conventions? I would like to see you again. The last time was right after the publishing of *Yo*, and I bought a signed copy from you. I have been a great fan ever since. Looking forward to more gorgeous art work.

**MEASON E. KOLKHORST**

You bought *Yo*? Damn, that was nine years ago! There's an expensive item.





UH...  
CAREFUL  
WITH THAT...

I AM  
THE GREAT AND  
POWERFUL JOEY!!

AVENGER  
OF  
ALL EVIL!!!

GIVE  
THAT BACK,  
JOEY...

BEFORE YOU  
CUT OFF SOMETHIN'  
YOU'RE GONNA  
MISS!

THIS KIND  
OF SHIT NEVER  
HAPPENS TO THE  
X-MEN.

Mik  
96





## What if Hepcats comics were forbidden?

Outrageous? Sure it is, but the works of many comic book professionals have been seized and sometimes banned by the real life thought police.

**The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund** was founded to fight these threats. In the last five years, the CBLDF has spent over \$200,000 defending First Amendment rights in the comic book industry. We have successfully defended or deterred over a dozen threats to comic book artists, publishers, and retailers from over-zealous police departments, prosecutors, and would-be censors.

Please help us continue our mission to fight censorship by making a donation. With your support, the CBLDF can continue to champion comic book professionals' freedom of speech. After all, it's the thought police who should be banned!

(photocopy this form and mail)

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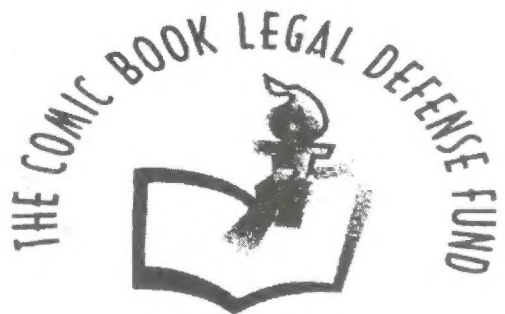
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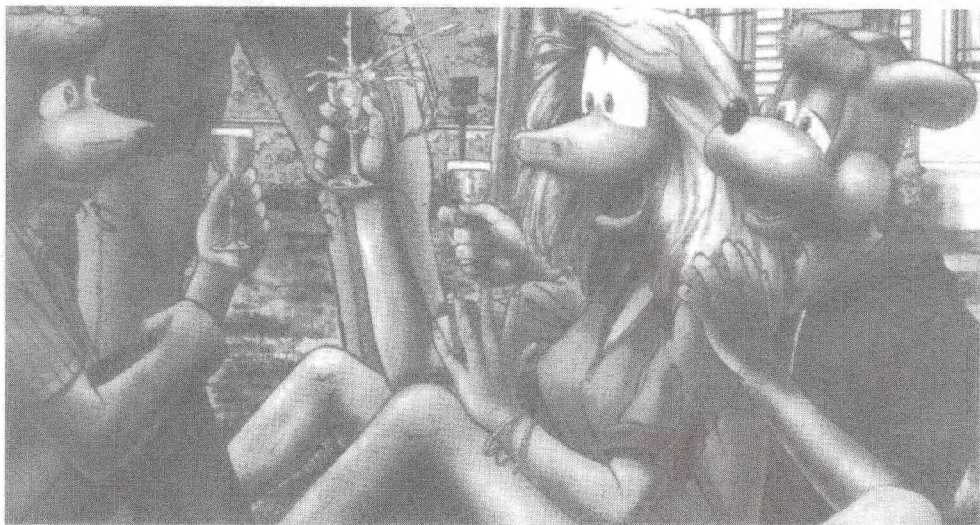
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## A NOTE FROM THE CREATOR OF HEPCATS

It's very disturbing to me to see that, even with a moderate Democrat in the White House, the forces of ultraconservatism are still out there trying to tell you and me what we can read, look at, listen to, see, and think. If you think that sounds melodramatic, please, come out from under your rock. Recent cases such as the Oklahoma bust of Planet Comics (a set-up by the Christian Coalition) and the conviction of Mike Diana in Florida, which is now being taken to the Supreme Court, point to a frightening trend.

Opportunistic politicians and prosecutors are targeting comics because we're an easy target. Comics are not a mass medium; they are a marginal art form without the public support and the money that Hollywood and the music business have to defend themselves. So it's easy for the advocates of censorship to cement their individual careers by pandering to the fears and prejudices of their uneducated constituents, by conjuring up horrible images of perverted artists and sleazy retailers pushing porno comics into the hands of little kiddies. It's certainly an inflammatory image, until you realize the image is a lie.

You can fight the lie! Whether you choose to order this poster, or just to send the CBLDF a straight-up donation, they need help! They are running out of money and would not have been able to continue Mike Diana's appeal had the Florida ACLU not stepped in.

Now, whether you like or dislike Mike Diana's comics is irrelevant. (I hate them myself.) What is relevant is that once one artist's rights are taken away, it opens the door for a further whittling away of everyone's personal freedoms, until all that will be left for us to read and look at will be listed on a government-approved form...

No way, not in my America!

When *Hepcats* #7 first came out, it caused a minor sensation due to the nude scene on the preceeding page. I find the scene non-exploitative and even beautiful, but there are people whose minds are so poisoned by the idea that all sex is dirty, that they might like to see me tossed in jail for that image. Story context is immaterial. All that matters is the knee-jerk reaction. God only knows what these people might think of *Hepcats* #11...

Please support the CBLDF today! As the saying goes, all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people—you—to do nothing.

Thank you,  
**Martin Wagner**